

# By accident



Lev Tolstoy

## **By accident – by Lev Tolstoy**

He returned by 6 am in the morning and went to the washroom as usual, but instead of undressing, he sat - fell into the chair, dropping his hands on his knees, and sat still in that position for five or ten minutes, or an hour, he did not remember.

- Seven hearts. - Covered! - And he saw his dreadful, unwavering disgusting face, still shining with complacency.

- Oh, damn! - He pronounced loudly.

Something moved behind the door. And, in the night cap and night shirt with embroidery, green velvet slippers, his wife came in, attractive energetic brunette with shiny eyes.

- What happened? - She said simply, but after having looked at his face, she screamed the same: - What happened? Misha! What happened to you?

- What has happened to me is that I lost.

- Did you play?

- Yes.

- And what?

- What? – He repeated spitefully. – That I am ruined! - And he sobbed, barely holding tears.

- How many times I asked you, begged.

She felt sorry for him, but she felt even more sorry for herself – that they will be in need, and that she did not sleep the whole night, waiting for him in anguish. "It is already five o'clock", she thought, having glanced at his watch which was on the table,

- Ah, tyrant. How much?

He waved both hands over his ears.

- Everything! Not everything, but more than that: everything mine, everything bank-owned. Beat me. Do with me whatever you want. I am ruined.

And he covered his face with his hands.

- I do not know anything else!

- Misha! Misha, listen. Take pity on me, I'm a human, too, I did not sleep all night. Waited for you, in pain, and this is the reward! Tell me at least - How much?

- So much that I can't, nobody can, pay. All sixteen thousand. It's all over. To run away, but how?

He looked at her, and what he couldn't expect, got attracted to her. "How pretty she is," he thought, and took her hand. She pushed him away.

- Misha, but tell me, how could you?

- I was hoping to recoup. - He took out a cigarette and hungrily began to smoke. - Yes, of course. I'm a bastard, I don't deserve you. Throw me out. Forgive me for the last time, Katya, and I'll disappear. I could not, could not. It happened to me like in a dream, by accident. - He grimaced. - But what else to do. I am a dead man anyway. But you forgive me. - He again wanted to hug her, but she angrily moved away.

- Oh, these pathetic men. Pretend not to be afraid as far as everything goes well, but when it is bad – they get desperate and become good for nothing.

She sat on the other side of the dressing table.

- Tell me how it happened in order.

And he told her. Told as he was carrying money to the bank and met Nekraskov. He invited him to come over and play. And they played, and he lost everything and now decided to kill himself. He said he decided to commit suicide, but she saw that he had not decided but was desperate and was ready for anything. She listened to him and, when he finished, said:

- This is all silly, disgusting: it is impossible to lose money by accident. This is some kind of lunacy.

- Blame me, do whatever you want with me.

- But I do not want to scold you - I want to save you, as I always did, no matter how repulsive and pathetic you are to me.

- Hit me, hit. Not for long already...

- So, listen. In my opinion, no matter how nastily, mercilessly you torture me. I'm sick – today even had to take... and suddenly this surprise. And this helplessness. You are saying, what to do? It is simple what to do. Immediately - now is six o'clock - go to Frimm and tell him.

- Will Frimm take pity? I should not tell him.

- Wow, what stupid you are. Will I advise you to tell the director of the bank that you have lost the money trusted to you in a card game? Tell him that you went the Nicholayevskiy railway station... No. Immediately go to the police. No, not now, but in the morning at ten o'clock. You went along the Nechaevsky Lane, and two men jumped on you. One with a beard, another – almost a boy, with a revolver, and they stole the money. And then - immediately to Frimm. Tell him the same.

- Yes, but ... - again he lit up a cigarette. - They can learn what happened from Nekraskov.

- I'll go to Nekraskov. And I will tell him. I will do it.

Misha started to quiet down and at 8 am fell asleep like dead. At ten she

woke him up.

That happened early in the morning on the upper floor. On the lower floor, in the family of Ostrowskiy, at six o'clock in the evening happened the following.

They has just finished the dinner. And a young mother, princess Ostrovskaya, called the servant, who was carrying orange jelly, having passed over all the cupcakes, and she asked him for a clean plate and, having put on it a portion of jelly, turned to her children - there were two of them: the elder - seven years old boy, Voka; and four-and-a-half years old girl, Tanechka. Both were very beautiful children: Voka - serious, healthy, gracious boy, with a charming smile showing his disjointed changing teeth, and black-eyed, fast, energetic Tanechka, talkative, joyful, cheerful, always happy and kind with everybody.

- Children, who will carry the cupcake to the nanny?

- I, - Voka said.

- I, I, I, I, I, I, - screamed Tanechka and fell from the chair.

- No, the one who said first. Voka. Take it, - said father who always spoiled Tanechka and therefore was glad the occasion to show their impartiality. - And you, Tanechka, concede to your brother, - he said to his favorite one.

- I'm always happy to concede to Voka. Voka, take it, go. I am not pitying of anything for Voka.

Usually, children thanked for lunch. And so parents drank coffee and waited for Voka. But by some reason, he was not coming for long time.

- Tanechka, have a run to the nursery, see why it takes so long for Voka.

Tanechka jumped from the chair, dropped a spoon, picked it up, put it on the edge of the table, it fell again, she again picked it and with laughter, rushing with her plump legs in tight stockings, flew into the corridor and in the

nursery, behind which was the nanny's room. She ran into the nursery, but suddenly heard sobbing behind her. She turned around. Voka stood beside his bed, and, looking at the toy horse, held the plate in his hand and wept. There was nothing on the plate.

- Voka, what are you doing? Voka, and what about the cupcake?

- I-I-I accidentally ate it on my way. I will not go... anywhere... I won't go. I, Tania... I, really, by accident... I ate it all... at first I ate a little bit, and then I ate everything.

- So, what to do now?

- I... by accident...

Tanechka pondered. Voka cried out desperately. Suddenly Tanechka gleamed.

- Voka, here's what. You don't cry, but go to the nanny and tell her that you did that by accident, and ask her for forgiveness, and tomorrow we will give her ours. She is kind.

Voka's sobbing subsided, he wiped his tears with palms and other sides of hands.

- But how will I tell her? - He said with a trembling voice.

- Well, let's go together.

And they went and came back happy and cheerful. And happy and merry were nanny and parents, when nanny, touched at her heart, laughingly told them the whole story.